

Patterns

St. Clair County Community College

P r e f a c e

In its fourteenth year **Patterns** this time presents some of its most exciting and creative work. The judges were happy to see some innovative and fresh ideas making their way into the entries.

Many hours of thought and diligent work have produced the high caliber of material represented by the student work included in this issue. We wish for all the students here represented the best in their creative endeavors in the future and special thanks should go to Mr. Patrick Bourke for his invaluable help in lay-outs for the past several years.

Judges

Writing

Richard J. Colwell
Eleanor Matthews
Fred Reed
Gary Garrett

Art

Patrick Bourke
Jack Hennessey
Earl Robinette
Dale Northrup



Figure Study

Albert Bankston

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Figure Study

Edward Neiman

HUMAN CONTINUUM

by

Dean Stern

Falling
i sensed the weightlessness
the rushing whistling wind
whispering my destiny
too softly
too randomly
to be understood

But i was falling
i screamed
attempting to pierce
the blackness

I screamed again
not comforted by my own voice
but knowing
that there were more
others like me
in this indeterminate hole

Vaguely in the distance
i heard a faint reply
or maybe i felt the reply
it was weak
and pleading
a last gasp

As i listened still
i heard others
shrieking screaming
piercing the blackness
with cries
and lamenting

I came soon
to comprehend
the ridiculousness of calling out
the absurdity
of the entire situation presented itself
and i listened more intently
and i learned

All of this
was only a point in time i thought
but it cannot be said
for how does a man
keep time in the blackness
of forever

I learned i said
and so it was that
in ignoring the others

i managed to distinguish
a form

It was only the wall
or the side
of this endless pit
still i clutched
at what i had discovered
and halted
my endless plummeting

While clinging
to this precarious perch
i soon discovered
that this pit was full
full of screaming yelling
people
full of fear

I was calm
for i was
secure
and unlike the rest
i could
see
for i had discovered
the truth about this
blackness

But the passing
of the thousands of millions
had eroded my niche
i was soon
swept away
back into the mainstream
yes back into
the blackness and the numbness
of the infinite procession
all of us facing
infinity



Figure Study

Albert Bankston

She was called Eve.

Many women envied her for her beauty and exultant joy in life, a joy that would show in the most burdensome of tasks, the range of which included watering livestock and tending a garden . . . even while sweeping the chalky dust from the flagstones leading to her white door. Everyone who beheld her knew the gates of paradise had opened to let her descend to earth, and her dark, tempting eyes enticed even the most unromantic of men. Quiet, dark hair gently waved downward to rest upon her delicately smooth shoulders. All the favor of the universe had been radiated into her pinked countenance and lithe body, yet she did not flaunt herself before men; when she passed down the street, many winks greeted her delicate, trembling lips, gracefully parted in a mild smile that revealed even, glistening white teeth.

Such uncommon splendor may have attracted the men, but the women of her village were somewhat jealous and deliberately avoided her and told lies and unjust stories. But Eve continued to carry herself with the same serenity and peace: her mind welled up with joy at the chirp of a sparrow or the blooming of a desert flower.

She was originally from Jerusalem, the Holy City, and had come to live in a village in the wilderness so that she could behold the seasons arrive and depart, unhidden by ugly stone dwellings that mankind continually vomited upon the rolling plains and verdant desert wells. In the wilderness there was a freshness, a purity that seemed too holy for mere humans to inhabit. Nearly every afternoon an eagle would soar overhead and Eve would smile. It was indeed the land of the King of Heaven.

Shortly after coming to live at the village, the desert began to bloom with all the beauty of spring, and Eve would leave her home to walk within the wilderness that surrounded her village. Just before dawn, the dew of the cold night rested upon and nourished each petal, every unfolding bud and quivering leaf. Every morning the damp earth inhaled the warming sun's delicious smile and from the wilderness arose a chorus born in each living creature touched by the King of Heaven's light.

One morning the sun arose with a red hue, almost like the color of fresh blood. Eve was aroused by the unusual phenomenon and went into the desert to greet the color of the new day. But the villagers were suspicious and remained within their homes and did not venture forth, not even to draw water. When a wind arose, they mumbled that "the sorceress has caused this strange day." Slowly, as morning passed closer to the afternoon, the wind increased its wail, shifting across the plains, gathering momentum as it moved over open space. Mysteriously it crept, then walked, and ran over hills and through hollows, picking up force minute by minute, hour by hour, steadily revealing its awesome strength and immortal power. By noon, the day was so darkened that it struck deep fear into the souls of the villagers. For a day that had been so clear and fresh at its inception and glorified by a red sun, it was now becoming a rushing storm of driven sand and uprooted shrubs tangled with weeds. Everywhere the air was thick with an enveloping dust that even obscured the sun, leaving it a weak yellow ball feebly visible through the tormenting dust. What had happened to the day that dawned so promising? Somewhere in the wilderness a young woman was wandering, lost, unfairly

tricked by a tender morning. Somewhere in the lung-searing dust, Eve must have wept, alone and hopeless while the villagers cursed her and spoke against the 'evil woman from Jerusalem.' Such is the substance of life — innocent of innocents within the cyclone of the wilderness where innocence is buttressed or lost.

Throughout the day the storm continued to grow in intensity while the air grew darker and increasingly oppressive, seeming to eclipse the sun. Near evening, someone knocked on the door of Josiah the Elder, but when he opened the door, no one was there — only a dirty blackbird that had broken its neck and lay on the ground, spasmodically quivering. Silently it opened its eyes and stared at the old man, unblinking, then died with the same clouded gaze within its eyes.

No one knew when night came, it just arrived intertwined with the fury of the dusty storm. It seemed as though a black dragon was rolling over and over, across the entire land. That night the children went to bed expecting to awake to the trumpeting of the archangels, while their parents expected to see a new Arab legion descending upon the hapless village. But in the night, amid the fury of the winds, came a clap of thunder . . . no, not **one**, but many formed into one, like blocks of stone that form the Holy Temple. It seemed more than thunder, more than a noise born within the lashing clouds of dust or from the colored caverns beneath the earth. It seemed like a shout of greeting, a deep breath exhaled, welcoming a new spring within the arid wilderness. And the night became silent . . . the tumult ended with that eerie, joyful outcry.

When morning came and the people of the village dared to peer outside, they beheld a nerve-snapping sight — everywhere, even in the roads and along the rough stones of the courtyards, creeping up trees, even up the sides of the mud houses, **everywhere** there flourished pale blue morning glories. Over walls, up from the wells, wherever human eyes looked, there grew the morning glories; the bewildered villagers could not open their doors without several tender strands of the delicate flowers slipping within, nor could they walk without stepping upon the soft, fluttering blue, trumpet-like flowers. Honey bees happily buzzed from blossom to blossom in the frenzy to sample the delicious nectar, and occasionally a green hummingbird darted among the tangled glories. Such a morning after such a night! Everyone had been sure that the wind had blown every trace of green away, but now, it was impossible to walk without stepping upon a living blue and green carpet, a blanket covering shrub and rock alike. And Eve was sitting beside the well, calmly drawing water for the oxen and sheep, while she sang a song of praise:

creeping streamers of light
slip through blues of a morning sky
with wispy clouds skipping in the heavens
reflecting jewels beyond the skies
gentle, so gentle comes the Light of day
crowning with joy
the poor in spirit
with free-flowing hope!

When the villagers first noticed that Eve was with child, there was the inevitable fluttering of tongues. What a scandal for an unmarried woman! But there was no denying the facts: Eve was pregnant, an inglorious

position for a startling beauty and upright woman. Most of the villagers conferred among themselves in an effort to discover which man she had been meeting on her walks in the wilderness, but their enquiries were not satisfied. So the "sorceress" continued to be held in suspicion.

As the ninth month approached, the villagers became increasingly eager with expectation and watched day by day, each person hoping to be the first to catch a glimpse of the child or to hear its first wail. But she did not deliver. Nor did she deliver by the tenth month, although everyone said 'surely this shall be her month.' Neither did she deliver by the eleventh or twelfth months. Her size remained constant and a baby stirred within, but it made no effort to leave the protection of it's mother's womb.

One morning a young boy of twelve years, Thomas, was on his way to the well to fetch water for his mother when he saw Eve at the edge of her garden, singing her morning song of praise; but she was not alone — someone else was singing with her, but Thomas did not know who it might have been. Out of curiosity he approached the happy young woman who ceased her joyful song, yet somehow continued to sing, no, it . . . came from **within** her, her child was singing, clearly and unfalteringly! Within the hour all the people of the village had come to behold the miracle and prove it with their senses, lest they be deceived. But it was true, the unborn child continued to sing his joyful song, and everyone in the village was struck incredulous. Within the day, people from all the surrounding villages came to witness the newly-performed miracle; a wonder of creation, almost too incredible to believe.

Sometime during the night Eve left the village; whether she returned to Jerusalem or not was never known. Perhaps if war with the Arabs had not broken out shortly after her disappearance, we would know today. But it has been thirty years since that time, and we shall probably never know the truth. Truth seems to lose to war and hate, sometimes.

PARIAH

Did you hear the guns this morning?

The neighbor girl was singing one of those old church hymns or something, oh yes, the **Gloria**, but she wailed it so zealously that everyone in the neighborhood was roused from their sleep. She knows that kind of thing can only get us all in trouble with the zemstvos . . . or worse. We **have** been having our problems, you know, of production, keeping with past records, all that nonsense. I truthfully doubt it'll be a good year for us. Or at least for most of us. It's a hard life we have, not all the glamour of Odessa; but then, it's not all the frigidity of Siberia. I suppose the younger ones — like that girl — would rather leave; the monotony is so pressing and the work quite strenuous. Schooling and education, that's what the young people want, but I don't know what for; no, for my soul I don't know what for. They go to school and get smart ideas, then they want to go to the big universities and become doctors and generals. Or they go to the tech schools and learn about rockets and computer machines and all that menagerie of monsters, but I don't understand **why** — for me it would be bad. You probably know what happens to them when they're educated. They go to cities like flocks of chickens and live

soft lives away from harsh realities, the tough life; maybe they see nothing but papers, pencils, ink and books, but they still call it life, and call it better than when they were **here!** Apparently they like the cities and brick-lined life of shuttling through damp, mildewed stones. They **prefer** it! Such wandering through glassy streets and glittering store fronts disturbs me, it seems so foreign, so . . . not meant for **real** human beings. You smile! You think I'm foolish, maybe even dangerous, eh? Maybe you're right, who knows for sure? I only know what I know, nothing more and probably less. You may say those kids in the cities think they know **what** they are and where they're going, but I have a feeling that they're too sure of themselves and are too ready to sacrifice themselves to causes that will someday be overthrown by other causes. Maybe it's better not to have a cause, a hope. Still, it seems sad that all the world is one big revolution — for nothing. Men keep looking for position and power by singing anthems and marching on May Day. I don't know, I'm old and stupid, a peasant before, a comrade now; but it doesn't really matter what I'm called, because "I exist as I am, that is enough."

I clearly remember one of those whooping, ambitious kids who went away to get knowledge like the others. Mikhail was his name. He thought knowledge was truth and truth gives power . . . maybe his knowledge **was** truth, I don't know for sure. Anyway, one day about thirty of us workers were cutting wheat in the third division with scythes flashing in the intense rays of the sun; yes, we were working under the noon rays, waiting for the break for lunch. When it finally came, all of us were exhausted and went over to sit beneath the towering oak trees by the field's edge, but we had no sooner sat down to rest when young Mikhail burst out laughing and said "This all seems so foolish, so meaningless! Look! Year upon year we plant, plow and harvest these fields, only to do it again next year. I will go to the city and learn how to stay away from bondage tombs like these."

Alyosha, his father replied: "Go! See what it's like there, get smart and never come back to this life. It is hard work here in the fields and only men who can love it are needed. Go to the big city and get a job — as a street sweeper if you like — but I'll tell you something you should never forget: There is no knowledge like the knowledge buried beneath dark soil; there is no medicine like a waving field of grain; there is no position of power greater than that held by a man who looks at a star and says to himself: 'I am nothing when compared to that faint twinkle.' Remember that you are human, you will live and know joy mixed with sorrow, exaltation followed by disappointment. Then after knowing these things, you will die, and your dust will be carried within the clouds that pass across the evening sky, or upon the hot breeze passing over scorched fields. That is the story of all men — the plot is the same, only the words are different. You leave this land now, but you will come back, yes, Mikhail, you will return just as the greatest of Tsars or the lowest of serfs." We finished our work that day and went home more exhausted than ever before.

Mikhail was gone about fifteen years, maybe a few less. Sometimes we heard that he was doing well, but usually we didn't hear anything. Katerina, his mother, once told me he was an important leader in the Komsomol . . . no one knew what he was doing for sure. He must have been in the army for a while, since it is required for all able young men. Only his parents might have known for sure what he was doing or where

he was. It was all so mysterious, almost a forbidden topic . . . but life rolled on, season following season, years piling up like discarded bottles — their contents had been drained, but they were reminders of what had passed.

As I continued to grow older, the disappointment within me grew . . . after all, Mikhail had never let me know how he was getting along, not even a note. You see, he and I were very close, he was like a grandson, or so I had thought. But no word came. NEP ended and the five-year plans began, but we weren't disturbed too much because we were already more or less collectivized. The parish church was closed and our priest went somewhere else, but I don't remember his name or where he went. I never was overly religious, and now my mind isn't as strong as it used to be. Anyway, we used the church building as a grainery for awhile . . . now it's a nursery where some of the women babysit while others help in the fields or elsewhere. I'm too old to go out every day, but I still go out at least twice a week for exercise. Also to set an example so the younger men won't think they're getting too old to work. But wait! I'm off the track, where was I? . . . ah, yes, well, time went by as it always had. It seems to know what the goal is and stops for nothing.

About three years ago, there was a horrible accident during the harvest. Anton, a teamster, was supposed to haul a wagonload of wheat to the miller to be ground for the winter's bread. Wagons were needed in the fields, so to keep from using two wagons, the men at the grainery had decided to fill just one with about twice the usual number of bags of wheat. The wagon creaked along slowly and everyone realized that the five kilometer journey to the miller's would take much longer than usual. Well, Alyosha accompanied Anton on the trip, partly for companionship but also to check the axles to make sure they were taking the bumps and strain without too much danger. When Alyosha decided to check the axles for about the third time, he walked along beside the wagon to observe how they were surviving the jostling of all that weight. Well, just as Alyosha started to say something to Anton, the wagon slipped into an old rut and the left fore wheel broke right off, toppling all that weight upon poor Alyosha. The lower part of his body was pinned, and it was some time before we could get the wagon off him — he died that night.

In accordance with a recent decree, he was to be cremated three days later, but until then, the coffin was placed in the front room of his house so friends could come to pay last respects. Katerina and several of her children kept a vigil until the third day, when the coffin was taken away.

During those sad days, people could not help wondering if Mikhail would hurry home, but he didn't appear, and everyone berated him for his callous behavior. Except for me. You see, I knew what kind of boy Mikhail was and trusted his judgment, even though I was disappointed about not hearing any word from him about his new life. He wasn't such a mystery to me, though, as he was to everyone else. The night before the funeral I didn't go to bed, but instead, sat beside the window thinking about past harvest seasons. You know, when you're old there's really nothing wrong with occasionally reviewing the past, as long as it's a past you don't regret. I don't like to disturb my present peace of mind by conjuring up grievous experiences, so I think of good times and happy occasions. Make sure you have plenty of both when you're young so you'll

have good deeds to reflect upon. That's experience talking, nothing more or less.

Anyway, as I was sitting there beside the window, I knew I could hear a horse and rider galloping, no, **talumpin**, along the silent nocturnal roads . . . closer and closer . . . pretty soon they would reach the edge of the village. Then came the calculated slowing down to a trot, slowly and cautiously . . . the horse and rider were one, together, sniffing the village's pulse; slowly, slowly because no one could be awakened. Both were black as the ink from India, and a loose cape drifted around the rider's shoulders and back.

Other people heard and saw him too; thus, within several days the whole village babbled and seethed with incredible stories about the visitation being an apparition or phantom or some other absurd thing. I didn't listen because I knew who it was and suspected the reasons behind such peculiar behavior.

The funeral was not marked with any extraordinary occurrences, regardless of the happenings of the night before. Mikhail was not there, an event that caused a quickening of already sharp tongues. Yet within several weeks the storm had passed and life was filled with the usual monotony to which we were all accustomed. When Katerina died about two months later, no one was very surprised; most of the people said she died of an overdose of heartache and grief. Maybe so, who knows? This time there wasn't any midnight horse and rider moving along dusky roads or through dense forests. Often, very often, that side of man — the unseen side — moves among the depths and can't be held in the light! Sometimes when men recognize the unseen face in the mirror, they flee from it and deny its existence, but that's like saying the morning sun doesn't exist whenever you shut your eyes. The past seems to live with us always, we can't seem to get away from it or hide among comfortable todays. Everything brought to light stays there, even if you or I choose to reject it. The morning sun reveals everything, beautiful and ugly alike. It always does.

But there! I'm forgetting where I was . . . yes, Katerina died, too, and was scattered in the wind like Aloysha. This time no one said much about Mikhail, and the people who did gossip seemed to agree that he'd died or something. Or else was so high above our humble peasant heads that he needn't visit his inglorious birthplace.

That all happened about three years ago, I think, and we've had a few more harvest seasons since then. It doesn't seem to matter how good the harvest is from one year to the next, as long as the crops grow. When it's good, we take it for granted, but when it's poor, we worry that the government will be angry . . . God forbid **that**! Yes, the eternal cycles go on and on; in fact, just today the men went out to the seventh division to begin the gathering of the sheaves. Tough work, yes, but we're here to work and struggle — that's the only way anything becomes valuable. We're made for it . . . I think . . . so long as it's a working and striving upon the land. But now I'm not even sure of **that** . . . anymore . . .

Mikhail knocked on my door around midnight last night. He was no ghost . . . he was Mikhail. He was wearing one of those gray uniforms, the kind that they wear in labor camps and other places for criminals. The law says that we must report criminals to the police immediately or face

"grave" consequences, but I didn't particularly care. Besides, Mikhail wasn't really a criminal just because the law said he was.

I made him come in and sit down; he looked so tired! In the dim, eerie light of my kerosene lamp, I almost thought he was a phantom. When he spoke, his words were dry and gasping, full of weariness.

"The KGB knows I'm coming here, you will be in deep trouble."

"I'm old, too old to bother about 'trouble'. You know I've never cared about 'trouble'. Are you running for your life?"

"Yes." He parted his lips to say more but hesitated, listening for something I couldn't hear.

"When did they catch you?"

"Right after papa's funeral; they planned their trap when they heard of his death. I was foolish to come home, but I couldn't stay away . . . so they caught me. And now they'll catch me again, but it doesn't matter because I've seen and felt more in my short years than most men would in five hundred. It's like papa said: I was born, I have lived, and I shall die. I have felt the sun's warming rays and the winter's snapping frost — yes, to know pain, to suffer, is to be human, fully human. Pain — but most of all, the realization of what it is and can be — separates mankind from a weathered boulder or scarred alley cat. To feel an ascending breeze and to sing among the dense spring mists — that is what being human is. What is my fleeting sting when compared to the agony of the human race? What men do to even a lowly man such as I, they do to themselves. I am their reflection, even though the looking glass is as old as heaven itself.

"Maybe, grampa, since I haven't ever had a fine home or a wife and children, maybe you say my life has not been happy . . . but I have had a home beneath the forest's boughs and the dome of heaven; my family is among those who have found hope nestled among bullrushes . . . and sleeping beneath a universal star."

The clock on the table ticked gently but with self-assurance. There sat Mikhail on the opposite side of the small rough table that had been used by my parents and their parents. There sat my chair, suddenly scratched and brittle, beside the window where I had seen the midnight rider. As he glanced out the open window at the glittering stars, Mikhail asked "Will you remember me as one of those kids who got smart?"

"I . . . I will remember you as Mikhail." I slowly got up and moved toward the samovar.

"You needn't bother to get me tea; I'll be going."

"Mikhail, how long have you been one of the Christian fathers?"

He stood up and slowly walked to the door, preparing to go back out into the night. His grey eyes clouded beneath a superficial glaze.

"It seems like all my life."

"But **why**? Why the life of a lishentsi?"

"Each man is given only a second in the spectrum of eternity, and I have found freedom in bondage, in service not to this physical and decadent world, but to an idea. My mind has been clear with truth and my

heart joyful with hope. What more can a man ask? Except, maybe, to behold the red sun arise on a harvest-day's morn. Slowly, like the sun, have we arisen, striving for freedom and now . . ." The door creaked shut.

Today the men started cutting the seventh division, but after Olga woke me up with her singing, I went for a walk. At first I wasn't sure where I should go, then I decided to see if the third division was drying. The morning sun was so big and warming that all my worry and confusion seemed vanquished from my soul like clouds after a thunderstorm. Perhaps more is unseen than seen. Maybe the Soviet was wrong in what it had been hoping for and Mikhail right . . . maybe material success isn't a sign of the State's glory — or God's favor. Look at the newborn babe — it has nothing . . . only loving parents, but look how full of life it is, how rich!

I finally got to the edge of the field, the one with the oak trees where we used to eat our lunches. In a shallow ditch lay what I knew I'd find.

Did you hear the guns this morning?

Londonderry Aire

by

"M"

"Seems almost like 'ome to me any more," the grizzled Cockney sergeant said. "I've been 'ere so many times me wife thinks I'm 'avin' an affair over 'ere. Not that I wouldn't like to, mind you, but you knows our orders concernin' frat'rnizin' wi' the civilians."

"From the looks we got coming in here, I rather doubt that there would be any civilians for us to fraternize with." One of the enlisted men, a light machine-gunner, was speaking. "British troops don't seem to be very welcome in 'Derry."

"No, they don't," another added. "It would be our bloody luck to come just after the IRA starts a policy of killing a British soldier for every Mick that gets his."

The Cockney sergeant grunted at the last comment. "Lor', they've been promisin' that for years. 'Ave you ever known an Irishman to keep a promise? Oh, a couple of us might buy it from a sniper, but a couple of us might get run over by a lorry, too. Chances are about the same. No, lads, there'll be a lot of rocks an' bottles, an' we might get a few of them, an' then it's all over an' we can all go back 'ome again until a few more Micks 'ave bit too much an' start thinkin' they're oppressed. Then we comes back again for the same o' thing."

A tall, thin youth stirred uneasily. "They, the Irish, might be right, you know. After all, they are Englishmen by law, and we have taken away some of their rights by —"

"Oooww! Look at our little barrister," interrupted the sergeant. "Well, Milord, wha should we do? Ask them to please settle down an' we'll elect Miss Devlin Prime Minister? Tell 'em that if they all stop throwin' cocktails that we'll march in Saint Paddy's Parade?"

"No, Sergeant, not that. I was just thinking —"

"Listen 'ere, Corporal. 'Oo ever told you that yer to think? Yer in 'Er Majesty's paratroops now, an' you'll let someone else do yer thinkin' 'oose job it is to think. Yer job is to do whatever 'e thinks you should do. Is that straight?"

"Yes," replied the corporal, "but the Catholics haven't been treated fairly. Something should be done for them."

The sergeant, annoyed by the corporal's first statement, had become angry and perturbed that a non-commissioned officer should question anything. "You never give up, do you?" he said as he went over to the corporal. "Well, mate, something can be done an' yer the man to do it. I wants you to let all those nice, innercent, loyal subjects of 'er Majesty to know where they stands an' 'ow we of the British Army really feels about them. In fact, I've even got a special little mission for you so's you can go out an' mingle with 'em an' tell 'em what they should know. Sort of 'Public Relations', if you knows what I means."

"No, Sergeant, I don't. What exactly do you mean?" asked the corporal.

"I means," replied the sergeant, "that yer goin' to be patrollin' Bog-side tonight."

In another part of Londonderry, in the Catholic section of Bogside, another group of men were discussing the presence of British troops, but with quite a different point of view.

"Some more paratroops came today," a young Irishman was saying. We're practically like an occupied country, we are. What can we do now?"

"Kill the whole damned lot of 'em," came a reply.

"Aye, send them all home in boxes," said another Irishman. "Then they'll be willin' to listen to us."

At the end of the table that the group was gathered about sat the oldest of them, a tall and powerful man in his fifties. He leaned forward in his chair and spoke. "Those are fine ideas you have, but then we'd be no better than those Englishman. No, I think that our original plan is still best. We'll avenge every Irish dead with a British soldier until they stop killing us or we kill all of them. They've no right to do what they've been doin'. They've got to know that they can't invade our homes, cart us off, and shoot our children. We must show them that we'll not tolerate this breach of our rights. Now, to business. The paratroops will be patrolling Bogside tonight. One of them must be shot. Only one. Sure, assassination is a nasty business, and I'll not order one of you to do it; I'll ask for a volunteer."

"Then it's that there's to be but one of us out tonight, and after but one Englishman?" One of the younger men, who had been standing near the door, came closer to the table. "Why can't we all go out and kill as many of them as we can?"

All of the eyes in the room were on the young man as the older quietly said to him, "We know that you've a thirst for vengeance. You need not remind us that your brother was killed by English bullets. But," he continued as he rose from the table, "I hope that I need not remind you that

we've more at stake here than personal revenge. Those are mighty strong words for one who's never killed a man before."

The young man stood eye-to-eye with his leader. "So it's that you think I'm not man enough to kill an Englishman? Or is it that you're afraid that I'll botch the job? All right, then, let me kill one Englishman for my one brother."

"Done, then," replied the leader, "but only one."

It was almost dark, and Corporal Brian Middleton was beginning his patrol through Bogside. As he walked, he wondered what the sergeant's remarks would have been had he told the sergeant that his mother was Irish. I feel like an idiot, he thought as he turned the corner to go down the street that he had been assigned to patrol. A bloody idiot. He hated to be watched, particularly while he was walking from one place to another for the sake of walking, and he felt as if every inhabitant of every house was scrutinizing him.

Lost in thought, he heard something in the alley across the street. He instantly whirled, unslung his submachinegun, and levelled it at a cat in a trash barrel beside one of the decrepit buildings. He considered shooting the blasted animal for a moment and then chuckled as he noticed how nervous he had become. He turned to resume his walk, greatly relaxed and smiling inwardly at his own foolishness, when suddenly a sharp, hot blow struck him in the chest and sent him reeling to the ground.

Young Robert McMahon could hear the slow, measured steps coming down the street that ran perpendicular to the one where he was waiting. Standing beside a doorway inside a deserted house, he thought, Please God, let him turn the corner so I can kill him. What would my priest think of that, he wondered. Jesus, forgive me, but they killed my brother.

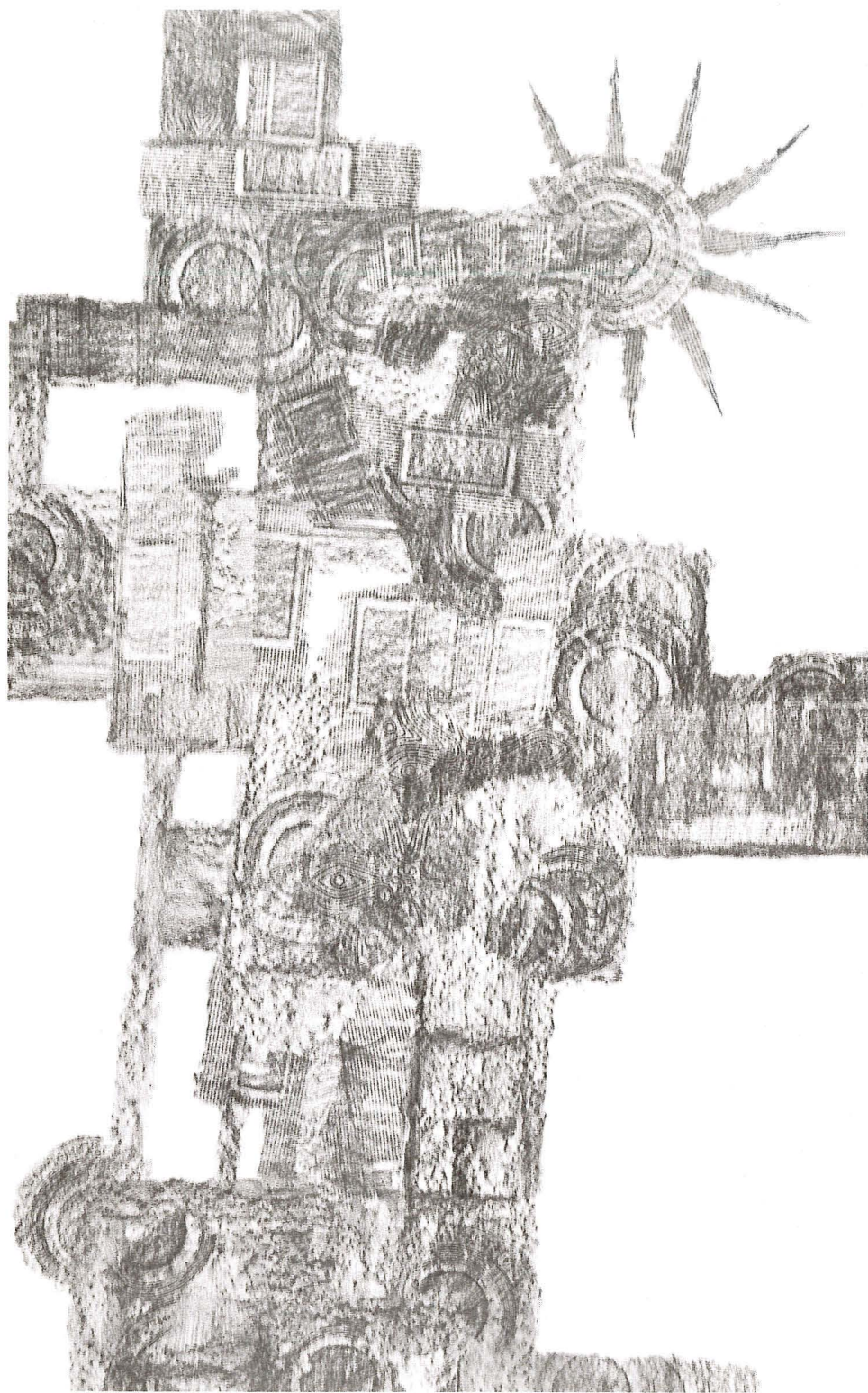
He peered around the door frame and saw that his prayer had been answered. The paratrooper was walking down his street with disciplined steps. Suddenly, though, the Englishman stopped and pointed his weapon into an alley. Perfect, thought Robert, as he took aim. When the soldier turned back down the street, Robert pulled the trigger.

Brian Middleton knew what had happened the moment he hit the ground. My God, he thought, they've killed me. He half crawled, half dragged himself to the side of the street as he felt his breath grow shallower and watched his blood fall on the pavement. My God, they've killed me, they've killed me.

This was not at all as it should be, thought Robert. Why doesn't he die? I never thought he'd crawl about like that, like a poor, hurt animal. In a split-second the soldier had turned from a symbol of oppressive imperialism to a pitiful, wounded man. Don't let him die, thought Robert, as he rushed out to help the wounded soldier, his rifle still in his hand.

". . . and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever." Brian lay dying, murmuring the Lord's prayer. He opened his eyes again and saw someone running towards him carrying a rifle. God, forgive me, he thought, as he raised his weapon and fired. The man with the rifle fell.

"Londonderry was relatively calm last night except for some rock-throwing youths. The British Army reported that another soldier had been killed, along with an Irish civilian. Miss Bernadette Devlin said today that . . ."



Texture Study

Carol Anderson

Finale

by

Dean Stern

In front of the old store
in the middle
of the gray and cracked
sidewalk
i saw
a flower

It was just
small
no higher than
my finger
with two leaves
and one pink bud

I knelt
to look upon
this sight in the city
and to wonder
from where it had come
and why it was growing

While i was thinking
a little boy
jumping the cracks in the walk
stopped
and pulled the flower up
and ripped the bud and the leaves
apart

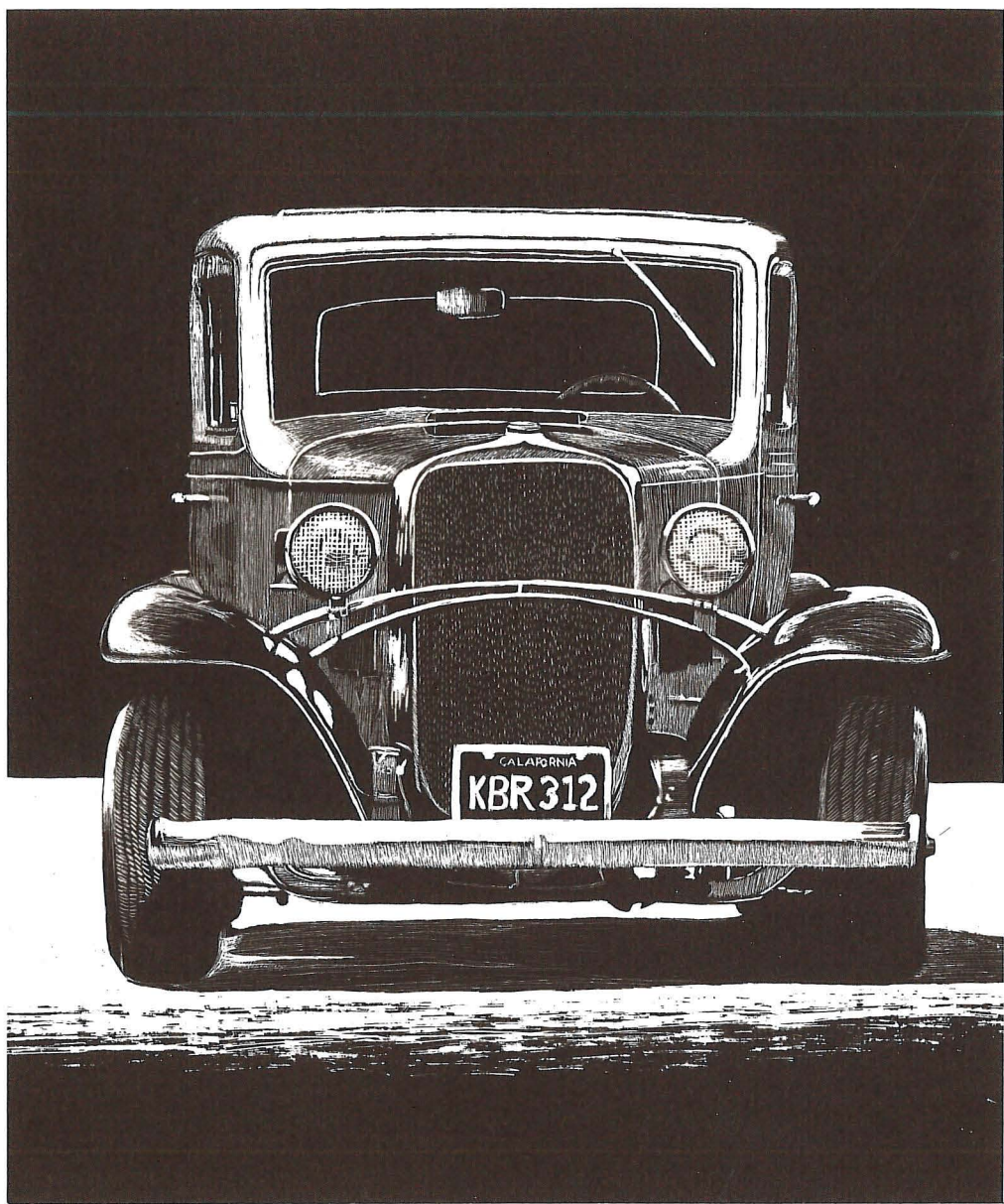
For a moment
just a moment
i felt sorry for this earth
and man

-Written During the High

by

Timothy David Mayhew

Four score and Seven
Beers ago
I was the cub
Assuming the lion
Now that I have
Emotionally displaced myself
I will nail my words
To this paper
And fly them on to you
Then draw a mouth
On a light bulb
So that it can laugh
More freely.



"Early Chevrolet"

Joseph Conard

Life With The Neighbors

by

Susan Schweihofer

It was one of the hottest days of summer, and I decided that it was much too warm to work and I would therefore spend the afternoon basking in the sun and occasionally taking a swim in our pool. My two daughters were very busily playing in their playhouse with three of the neighbor children. Our back yard resembles a public playground with all of the play equipment we have, and the kids were getting along fine and seemed quite contented playing and swimming together. Ah, what a relaxing afternoon I was going to have in the privacy of my own back yard.

Fifteen minutes must have passed when I heard a car drive in the driveway. I looked up just in time to see my sister-in-law, Sandy, and her three children getting out of their car. They were all clad in swimsuits, so that I immediately reached the conclusion that they intended to stay for awhile.

"Hi!" said Sandy. "I couldn't get a hold of you on the phone, so I figured since it was so hot you would probably be out in the yard taking it easy. I didn't think you would mind if we came over for a swim."

"Oh, not at all." I replied. "I'll get you a lawn chair. I wasn't really extremely pleased to see them. They are delightful people, but for some reason it seems that Sandy never sees anything her children do, and therefore I am constantly watching them along with my own. I could see I was going to be quite busy, as there were now eight children playing in our back yard.

Not too long after that, Leona, the girl that lives across the road from us, walked over with her son and three more children. After exchanging greetings, Leona explained that they were her nieces and nephew and their dad had brought them along for her to watch while he was helping her husband out in the field. Leona's husband is a farmer, and his brother came out from the city to help him haul in hay.

I went after a lawn chair for Leona, and when I returned, Harriet had arrived. She is the mother of the first three children who came over to play earlier.

"Hi, Harriet." I said. "I'll get another chair for you."

"Oh, no, I can't stay. I just came over to see how the kids were behaving."

"Oh, they're fine. There are so many kids to play with, they couldn't possibly get bored."

As usual, Harriet can never stay, but she immediately joined in the conversation, and I became aware of the fact that she did not intend to leave very soon, so off I went to get another lawn chair.

Needless to say, at this point, there was not much time for relaxing. The women were deeply engrossed in their conversation, and I was getting more nervous by the minute. Between supplying everybody with lawn chairs, soft drinks and counting heads of the children every so often to make sure there were twelve, I thought I was going to collapse. Whatever happened to the relaxing afternoon I was going to have!

After about an hour, and many head counts later, I discovered that there were only eleven children in the yard. I quickly recounted and still there were only eleven. Terrified, I ran to the pool. Fortunately, the missing child had not drowned.

"What's the matter?" Harriet asked.

"Somebody is missing. I don't know who it is." We soon realized that it was Mark, Leona's nephew.

"He must be in the playhouse." Sandy said. We looked and he was not there.

"Maybe he went in the house."

"I don't think so, but I'll look."

He was not there either, and by this time we were all quite uneasy. There is a woods behind our house, and we naturally thought he might have wandered out there alone or possibly near the road where a stranger could have picked him up.

Leona was optimistic, though, and she thought that he probably had walked across the road to her house and that during one of his trips in from the field his dad probably picked him up and took him back out with him. She seemed very satisfied with the explanation.

"Leona," I said a bit impatiently, "if he were my child, I would want you to make sure he was out there. If he isn't, then we had better keep looking."

"Maybe we should call the police." added Harriet.

Just then two of the older children were running toward us shouting, "We found him! We found him!"

They led us to Leona's driveway where a camper belonging to Mark's father was parked. The door was open, and we looked in. There was Mark sound asleep on the floor of the camper.

We were all very relieved and happy to see him safe and unharmed, but we were also quite shaken by the episode. Before long everyone had gone home, and my daughters and I were finally alone in our back yard.

I collapsed on the lawn chair, exhausted and completely unaware of the time of day, when I heard my husband's truck coming in the driveway. When he got out of the truck, he appeared to be very hot and tired. There is one thing he expects when he gets home from work, and that is for me to have his dinner ready. He very rarely complains, but observing the kids playing quietly and me stretched out on the lawn chair in what seemed to be a very relaxed condition, he looked a little disgusted and said, "Don't you have supper ready yet? You've had all day to sit in the sun, and the least you could do is have supper ready when I come home!"



A Study In Evil: Character Transition Through Hamlet and MacBeth

by

Timothy David Mayhew

The soul that sinneth, it shall die.

— Ezekiel

Hamlet and **Macbeth** create an amazing study in evil. In these tragedies, Shakespeare displays the moral dilemma resulting from the confrontation of good and evil.

This moral dilemma is seen in varying degree in each play. **Hamlet** is a study of a man in whom the impulse to go good initially predominates over the impulse to do evil. The tragedy lies in Hamlet's decline to a state in which evil is allowed to grow enough to paralyze the good. A step further is **Macbeth**, which opens with a man who is equally governed by good and evil. Here, the tragedy results from Macbeth's decline to a state in which evil predominates.

The impulses to do both good and evil can be thought of as opposite forces in a tug-of-war contest. One side may predominate for some time but the rope is never still; there is a constant tug back and forth until one side tires and enormous changes result. The forces of good and evil are thus tugging at each other to gain control, which results in violent changes at unusual times.

Although the forces of good are in control of Hamlet in the beginning, we find the young prince in a state of melancholy. This depression results from the combination of his father's sudden death and the rapid, incestuous marriage of his mother, for

Within a month,
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married. O, most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not, nor it cannot come to good.
But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue!

(**Hamlet**, I ii, 153-9)

This prostrated state of mind creates a fertile soil in which seeds of evil can grow, and it is not long before they are planted.

Barely two scenes later, Hamlet is confronted with the ghost of his departed father. The young prince interrogates the Ghost with an ironic "Speak. I am bound to hear." (**Hamlet**, I, v, 7) to which the Ghost replies "So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear." (**Hamlet**, I v. 8). Hamlet's single sentence conveys the entire tragedy, for he is bound only to hear, and not bound to become the murderer that the Ghost requires.

Unfortunately, Hamlet chooses to accept the duty as he begs for the details: "Haste me to know't, that I, with wings as swift/ As meditation or the thoughts of love,/ May sweep to my revenge." (**Hamlet**, I, v, 29-31).

Already we can see the confrontation of good and evil as they fight for possession of Hamlet's soul. He is trying to concentrate on revenge but his heart fights back with thoughts of love and meditations. The Ghost then proceeds to pour poison into Hamlet's ear with vivid descriptions of the murder and the murderer, and insists to the young prince that "... duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed/ That rots itself in ease on Lethe warf,/ Wouldst thou not stir in this." (*Hamlet*, I, v, 32-4). Unfortunately, Hamlet resolves to let the evil of revenge totally encase him as he swears:

Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past
That youth and observation copied there,
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmix'd with baser matter.

(*Hamlet*, I, v, 98-104)

Thus ends the planting of the seeds of evil which are to grow into the soul of Hamlet.

The rest of the play deals with the growth of evil confronted by the repressing force of good in Hamlet. Although the young prince devises a plan to adopt a facade of madness to shield him in his actions, he cannot stop his true agony from showing through. According to Ophelia, Hamlet looked "As if he had been loosed out of hell/ To speak of horrors —" (*Hamlet*, II, i, 83-4) when "He rais'd a sigh so piteous and profound/ As it did seem to shatter all his bulk/ And end his being." (*Hamlet*, II, i, 94-6). Even the King notices that neither "... th' exterior not the inward man/ Resembles that it was." (*Hamlet*, II, ii, 6-7).

But this changed Hamlet still has enough good in his soul, so that when Polonius begs to take his leave of Hamlet, the Prince claims "You cannot take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal — except my life, except my life, except my life." (*Hamlet*, II, ii, 213-215). This love of life is echoed by Hamlet's respect for man when he states "What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable; in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals!" (*Hamlet*, II, ii, 299-303).

However, in the same breath, evil tugs and Hamlet's thoughts are destroyed as he says "And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me —" (*Hamlet*, II, ii, 303-4). Thus, this growing evil is causing him to neglect all that he values in life, even life itself:

To be, or not to be — that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them. To die — to sleep —
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd.

(*Hamlet*, III, i, 56-64)

As evil slowly roots itself, Hamlet himself is battering others for the very things that bother him. He bitterly picks on Polonius by saying "O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!" (*Hamlet*, II, ii, 392-3). The meaning is clear: Polonius, like Jephthah, has sacrificed his daughter by commanding her to do something against her will. But the resentment is much deeper. In Polonius, Hamlet sees his father's ghost who commanded Hamlet to perform murder — which is violently against the young prince's will. Later in the "Nunnery" scene, Hamlet shatters Ophelia, and women in general, as he says "I have heard of your paintings too, well enough. God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another." (*Hamlet*, III, i, 142-4). However, this is actually a self-denunciation, for God has given Hamlet one nature and yet Hamlet has adopted a contrary one.

By now the evil in Hamlet has almost gained an equal stronghold with the good that once prevailed. This creates a paralyzing effect as these opposing natures strain to gain control of the soul. This equipoise causes Hamlet's bitter and caustic remarks about himself as well as his lack of action. He says:

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale case of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.

(*Hamlet*, III, i, 83-88)

Hamlet cannot stop his self-destructive rhetoric as he attempts to purge himself of his lack of action. However, Hamlet's choice of revenge as a form of action is the cause of his physical destruction. Hamlet alone is responsible for his own annihilation because of his free-will. No one could force him to accept the role he chose, for in his own words "Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me." (*Hamlet*, III, iii, 354-5). This free-will choice becomes clearer two scenes later when Hamlet rushes into his mother's closet to give her a lecture on self-control and then proceeds to blindly lash out and kill Polonius. His mother exclaims "O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain." (*Hamlet*, III, iv, 156) whereupon Hamlet retorts "O, throw away the worser part of it,/ And live the purer with the other half." (*Hamlet*, III, iv, 157-8). In these words, Hamlet is actually crying out to his own divided soul to throw away the evil half. Thus he admits that man has the power to purge evil. Therefore, his failure to do so lies upon his own head. His choice "O from this time forth,/ My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!" (*Hamlet*, IV, iv, 65-6) causes him to proclaim to his uncle, after returning from England, that "You shall know I am set naked on your kingdom." (*Hamlet*, IV, vii, 43-4). Here, just as a new-born babe is set naked on this world, a new-born Hamlet is set naked on the kingdom. This new Hamlet is no longer predominantly good, he has allowed evil to take root in a stronghold that is as great if not greater than the remaining good.

Hamlet himself sums up this reasoning in the last scene when he states "Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never Hamlet./ If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away." (*Hamlet*, V, ii, 219-220). It is at this stage that Hamlet dies, a man torn in half by the tugging forces of good and evil:

"In my heart there was a kind of fighting/ That would not let me sleep."
(**Hamlet**, V, ii, 4-5).

However, what would happen if Hamlet had lived? What course is there from this state of character? For this information, we turn to **Macbeth** which begins, more or less, where **Hamlet** leaves off. Just as Hamlet looks to the future with his exclamation "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" (**Hamlet**, I, iv, 39), so Macbeth looks to the past with his "The time has been, my senses would have cool'd/ To hear a night-shriek, and my fell of hair/ Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir/ As life were in't." (**Macbeth**, V, v, 10-13).

At the beginning of this drama, Macbeth is portrayed as a mighty warrior, the heroic savior of the realm. He has great courage and military ability; however, he possesses evil tendencies as well. His initial reaction to the witches' prophecy of kingship causes Banquo to ask "Good sir, why do you start and seem to fear/ Things that do sound so fair?" (**Macbeth**, I, iii, 51-2). Could it be that Macbeth had already been forming the idea of usurping kingship? This suspicion is confirmed when Macbeth admits that his "... dull brain was wrought/ With things forgotten." (**Macbeth**, I, iii, 149-50) directly after thinking about killing Duncan — or as he says "My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,/ Shakes so my single state of man that function/ Is smothered in surmise and nothing is/ But what is not." (**Macbeth**, I, iii, 139-43).

Thus Macbeth is initially portrayed as a man torn between opposing attitudes. He is verbalizing the good and the evil within himself, effecting a contrast between the two — unsure which will prevail. His moral judgment is held in abeyance as he asks "... why do I yield to that suggestion/ Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair/ And make my seated heart knock at my ribs/ Against the use of nature?" (**Macbeth**, I, iii, 134-7).

Briefly, the goodness within Macbeth is able to dominate. For example, he finally resolves that "If chance will have me King. Why, chance may crown me,/ Without my stir." (**Macbeth**, I, iii, 143-4). However, this good soon turns control of the soul over to evil when Malcolm is announced to be the next King. At this Macbeth throws off all restraints as he says "Stars, hide your fires!/ Let not light see my black and deep desires./ The eye wink at the hand: yet let that be,/ Which the eye fears, when it is done to see." (**Macbeth**, I, iv, 50-3).

As the growing evil corrupts his mind, his imagination and his soul, Macbeth is plagued by hallucinations. He is guided by an airborne dagger toward the murder of Duncan:

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee!
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?

(**Macbeth**, II, ii, 33-9)

At this point, Macbeth takes judgment and reason and casts them aside when he murders Duncan. The effect that this sin has on Macbeth's soul is portrayed through his reaction after listening to the prayers of

two awakened boys. For when Macbeth tries to say "amen", the growing tumor of evil gags him and chokes the "amen" in his throat.

This murder initiates Macbeth's rapid decline into evil, for he has "Outrun the pauser, reason." (*Macbeth*, II, iii, 108), and is now faced with damnation — the metaphoric stripping of Macbeth which leads to dehumanization and complete isolation from all men. He sees his present situation as that of being helpless: "To be thus is nothing,/ But to be safely thus." (*Macbeth*, III, i, 48-9), or more aptly stated: "It will have blood, they say; blood will have blood." (*Macbeth*, III, iv, 122). However, any trap Macbeth finds himself in results from his own doing, for prior to murdering Duncan, he himself admits that "If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well/ It were done quickly." (*Macbeth*, I, vii, 1-2). This realization makes Macbeth's sin even more grievous."

As the choking vine of evil continues to squeeze out the last bit of good left in Macbeth, we hear his utter "From this moment/ The very firstlings of my heart shall be/ The firstlings of my hand." (*Macbeth*, IV, i, 146-9). He has thus become a fiendish tyrant and murderer, best described by Macduff: "Not in the legions/ Of horrid hell can come a devil more damn'd/ In evils to top Macbeth." (*Macbeth*, IV, iii, 55-7).

Macbeth's last hope of salvation dies as he inquires of his lady's physician: "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd," (*Macbeth*, V, iii, 40) only to be confronted with the knowledge that "Therein the patient/ Must minister to himself." (*Macbeth*, V, iii, 46-6). Macbeth is beyond any aid that he himself can render, for he says that "They have tied me to a stake. I cannot fly./ But bear-like I must flight the course." (*Macbeth*, V, vii, 1-2)

To Macbeth, completely steeped in evil, life is given a new definition:

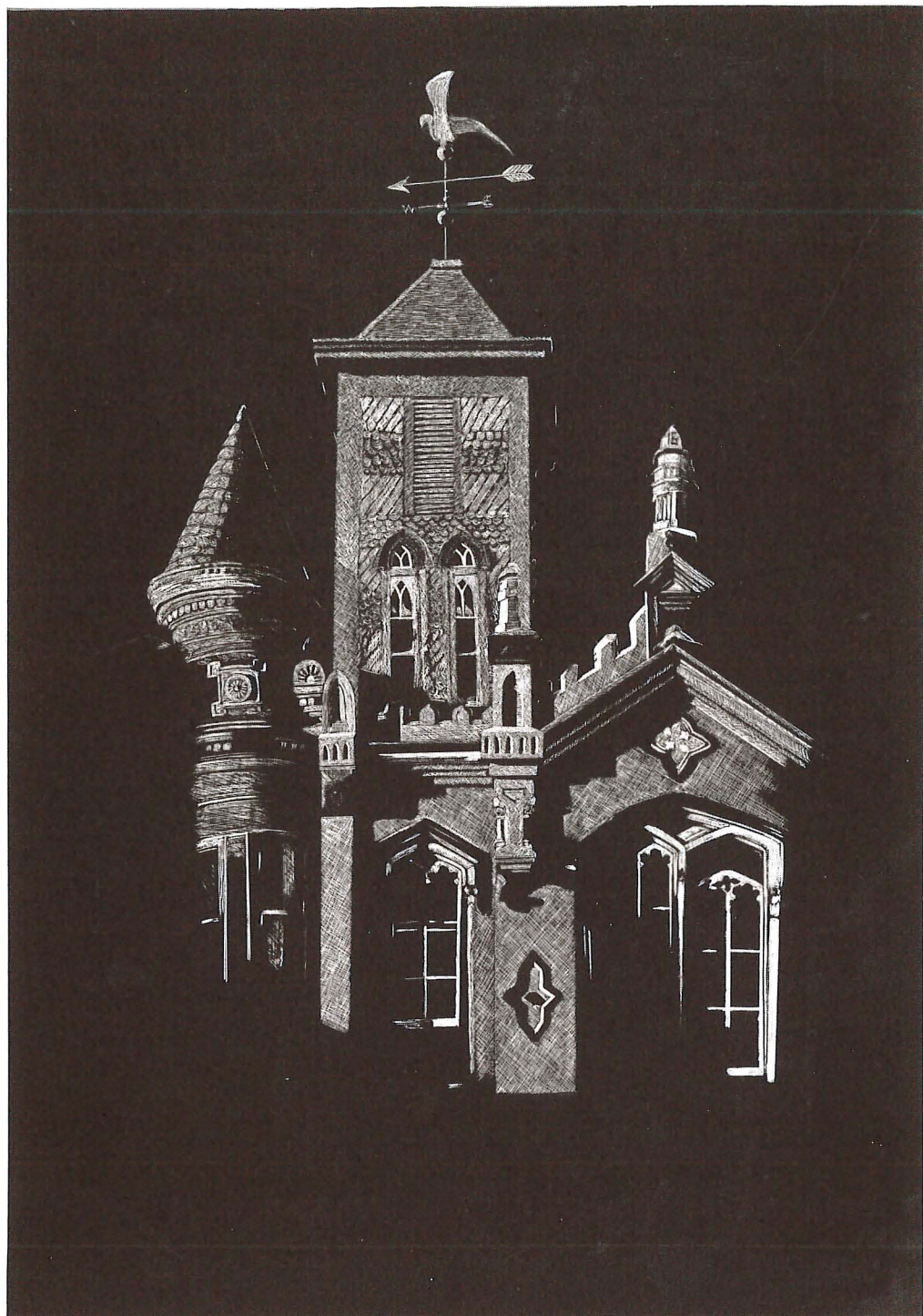
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

(*Macbeth*, V, v, 24-8)

What more is left to Macbeth than to mummer "I 'gin to be aweary of the sun," (*Macbeth*, V, v, 49) as he goes out to engage himself in a suicidal battle.

Here is Macbeth, once hailed as "valor's minion" and "Bellona's bridegroom", later cursed as a "dead butcher." In similar manner, Hamlet's exclamation "O, from this time forth,/ My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!" (*Hamlet*, IV, iv, 65-6) grew into Macbeth's statement "My strange and self-abuse/ Is the initiate fear that wants hard use./ We are yet but young in deed" (*Macbeth*, III, iv, 142-4), for bloody thoughts are but the seeds to bloody deeds.

Hamlet states that "Foul deeds will rise,/ Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes." (*Hamlet*, I, ii, 257-8). The tragedy in this statement and in both Hamlet and Macbeth lies in the fact that these "foul deeds" rise out of man's free-will. As was pointed out, both men were aware of their situations and of the possible consequences; thus the tragedy is that they accepted evil against their own nature. Polonius sums up the solution very aptly when he states: "This above all — to thine own self be true,/ And it must follow, as the night the day,/ Thou canst not then be false to any man." (*Hamlet*, I, iii, 78-80)



A Watermelon Pickle

by

Carol Anderson

INTRODUCTION

Through suggestive or impressionistic description, I am writing about a make-believe plant, how it grows, and how it is strangely related to a person. The name of the plant? A watermelon pickle.

Some scientists, those in the field of botany, some farmers, and some everyday people, have their own nice, neat, square, brightly-wrapped-and-tied-with-a-bow definition of a watermelon pickle.

But they're wrong.

Whatever plant or "thing" it is that they think they're defining, definitely is not named a watermelon pickle. They just call it that by mistake. A genuine watermelon pickle is very rare, and only I know all about them, have seen them, and have tasted one. However, I am not a selfish person, so I'll impart to you all the secrets I have learned from observation so that you might successfully raise this magic plant for the enlightenment the plant itself will give you.

When I was very young, I would cry when bitterly disappointed, when terribly hurt, either physically or deep inside me, or when I was tired, cold, or hungry. (With the immense imagination that I had, every feeling that I felt was, of course, magnified to a great degree, so I wasn't as bad off as I sometimes thought.) But one day, in the early part of July, as I lay in my favorite secluded spot in an abandoned corn field, crying out my hurts that I'd received that day, I noticed two large glittering drops descend on my cheeks and fall into a small patch of bare earth. As the tears quickly disappeared into the dry ground, I watched them with uninterested curiosity.

While I observed them, the strangest thing happened. A pinkish greenish spot appeared on the ground. Then a little yellow shoot of a plant pierced the earth's surface.

I stayed and watched this amazing development for quite a while, but nothing more happened. The day was growing short, so I reluctantly made my way home.

After that first day, I found myself drawn to observe the plant every day, and I don't think I missed any of its process of development.

To any person, such as me, not knowing much about plant life, the little yellow shoot kept getting larger and looked like an ordinary bean sprout.

When two weeks had passed, I decided to get up very early in the morning and watch my plant to see if anything strange would happen, as it did on that first day. So at five-thirty the next morning I was out in the corn patch watching and waiting.

Two large sparkling drops of the morning dew were on the tiny leaves, and they reflected the rising sun's rays in a kaleidoscope of brilliant colors. The whole plant seemed to shiver, as if it were anticipating the beauty and excitement of the newborn day.

I don't know where I got the idea — maybe it was because the dew drops looked like my salty tears — to water the plant with salt water and tuck soft cotton around its base. But I did it and the results were gratifying. No sooner had I done this, the plant turned a curious dark green shade with light green vertical lines running through it. I also don't know why I put the cotton around it. Maybe it was just an impulse to protect the plant and keep it warm.

During the remaining two weeks of July, the plant didn't seem to change drastically; it just got larger. And, of course, I watered the plant with the salty water and tucked cotton around it every day.

To my surprise and ecstatic delight, I arrived one late afternoon to check up on my plant, in mid-August, and found that a bud had started to grow.

Again I had an intuitive flash telling me not to use the salt water any more, but to pour honey around its roots, and instead of cotton, use marshmallows. This I did, and the bud immediately grew larger.

By the end of the third week, the bud had blossomed into the most beautiful flower I had ever seen. It was a soft, rose pink color, like the dawning sun; it had the crispness and freshness of the morning dew; it had a warm glow like that of complete contentment; and it smelled of a sweet mixture of honey, new rain, and a florist's shop. (Maybe this was due to the generous amount of honey and marshmallows it had received every day.) I thrilled at the exquisite beauty of this bloom, and then I cried silently — deep, happy, and thankful tears.

At the end of the last week in August, the bloom turned brown, shriveled up, and fell to the ground. And in its place was a small growth that promised to be the beginning of something new.

Since the bloom of the flower, I had stopped the daily applications of marshmallows and honey, and had just watered it with rainwater that I stored in an old coffee can.

As the summer progressed, the fruit of the plant's labor didn't seem to get much larger. It was about the size of a quarter, it was shaped like a tiny watermelon, and its color was like that of a green cucumber, or pickle. Now you can see why I suddenly decided to call this plant a watermelon pickle.

Soon the seasons were changing. Winter to warmth, summer to cold. The watermelon pickle was in its final stage. The fruit was the size of a half-dollar, and it appeared to be ripe. And on that cool August evening, I stood watching the orange sunset and the contentment that radiated from the watermelon pickle. I stooped down, looked at my plant that had become much a part of me, and burned its image into my mind because I felt that I'd never see it that way again.

Slowly I reached out and grasped the watermelon pickle. It felt cool and firm to my touch. Then I picked it.

A scream pierced the stillness — it was coming from the watermelon pickle, and it was a sound of twisting pain, of bottomless hurt — but not of fear.

Then before my eyes, the plant that I had nursed and loved so well slowly turned grey, shriveled up, and died.

Standing there in the shadows of the waning day, I bowed my head and cried. I was not ashamed of picking the fruit; I was not hurt; I was not sorry or remorseful; I was just sad.

I carefully peeled back the skin of the fruit and put it in my mouth. What I experienced was so very strange that I don't think I can actually describe it, but I'll try.

The texture of the watermelon pickle was cool, crisp, and very juicy. It tasted of: early dew, warm summer rain, salt, tears, honey, marshmallows, warm caressing sunshine; it tasted of happiness, responsibility, sadness, love; and most of all, it tasted of life.

By now you have probably seen the resemblance of a watermelon pickle to a human being. The life begins in an awesome way: it is carefully nourished with proper food and care; it goes through various stages to reach maturity; and it finally finds its real and true place and purpose in the world; and then it dies. These stages in life are filled with warmth and coolness, awareness of beauty, the need for stimulation, very much happiness, and very much sadness.

Until all of these feelings and many more are experienced, life truly has not been lived.

One really doesn't need a watermelon pickle to learn how to live, but if you could eat one and acquire understanding of people and things in the world that surrounds us, wouldn't life be experienced to the fullest?

The Storm

by

Priscilla De Meyere

It is an oppressively hot day in summer and everything is dusty and dry. All life creeps along at an unhurried pace to avoid exertion.

Suddenly, everything takes on a death-like stillness and nature is hushed. An eerie silence hangs over the scene, as if nature is holding its breath.

Then, off in the far distance, a noise breaks the stillness. It sounds like a tympany starting a roll and quickly crescendoes to a forte. The thunder has announced the coming of a storm.

Soon, lightning is seen raking the sky with its shining forks, while underneath, the thunder carries on with its rolls. The jagged forks seem to pierce the very dome of the sky.

Black, swirling clouds have been silently making their approach and give the sky a blue-gray effect. The sun is soon swallowed up and everything takes on this blue-gray cast.

The wind comes with the clouds and whips everything about in fitful gusts. Leaves and small twigs are swirling around in a teasing manner as the storm increases in fury.

Now the rain is seen approaching as a sheet of falling water. It appears as a solid wall engulfing everything with its advance. Houses and trees are quickly swallowed and buried beneath its downpour. Suddenly the rain beats furiously against the windows and the roof.

The full impact of the storm is reached and everything combined gives a fantastic display of sight and sound. Lightning again illuminates the blue-gray sky and is quickly followed by the roll of thunder. The wind tears at the shutters, and tree branches sway furiously. The elements combined are giving their best performance with each competing against the other.

Then, it's over. As quickly as it began, the storm quits the area and leaves only memories of its fury behind. The birds come out from hiding and start singing in a joyful chorus. Everything is refreshed and life is resumed.

Dream?

by

Rosalyn Sampeer

Mental exhaustion possessed me. My limbs lay like lead weights. The pillow, feeling like a cloud beneath my head, filled my mind with floating, fragmentary thoughts until nothingness gradually prevailed.

Ahead loomed an unbelievably enormous house standing on top of an oblate spheroid. The morning sun brightly illuminated the three-story house which I recognized as my own. Standing outside the complex structure, I was afraid and curious to enter — afraid because of the inhabitants and yet curious about their proceedings. Should I enter and risk harm to myself? It was as the structure sucked me inside that I realized I had no choice.

The first level of the structure was mostly dark. Brown eyes stared at me. Some were bloodshot. Some were weary. Some were hostile and seemed to say, "You don't belong here." The dirty people's skins perspired. The "have-nots" were mad. (Then I heard the rats squeaking in the basement). I looked up from the ground floor and saw the stairs which led to the second level.

The second level was lighter — the people were like me. The second-level people liked to jingle money in their pockets. "Jingle, jingle," said the coins in a passing man's pocket.

"Jingle, jingle, jingle," I mentally replied.

Televisions were noisier broadcasters of the imagined wealth. Therefore, they were allowed to blare from every room. Cheap clock radios, tape recorders, stereos, and tape decks were important, too.

I went in another room where Jones and his friends were playing euchre. Jones asked me to be his partner. At first it bothered me when Jones pulled cards off the bottom of the pile and casually moved the scorers down an extra point or two, but we began to win and the money heaped on the table looked appealing.

Squealing came from the basement again, and made me scared, so I mentioned it to Jones. He said he would write an editorial for the newspaper. This made me feel better.

As dusk advanced, Jones and I defeated every euchre opponent and became wealthy. The door to the highest level opened and whisked both of us upward.

Everything in the highest level was golden — jewelry, bathroom fixtures, and bleached hair. Jones tried to flirt with the women and was successful with the many divorcees. Pedicured poodles, with jeweled collars, lounged beside the women. The men's minds were completely taken up with intense stock market speculations and liquor.

Black rats began squeaking and scratching more violently than before, but this time, I too, completely ignored them. Rats shouldn't penetrate this level.

"I'd like a Gin Buck, please," I informed my host. After my fifth drink, the whole structure began to whirl. Just before I passed out, I knew night would come and find all of us asleep.

Creative

by

Ruth Kodet

How should I find her; she who called to me from distance unaccountable and times too diverse? For I had felt her mind bending over me as I read her story, and I knew she wanted me to come. She who had studied the immortality of the universe from the finity of life, had sought out others before me, I knew, and though she had found some kindred spirits; many were too frozen in their times to listen.

Now she called me — and I was glad to go. But what the way?

By sleep; and dreaming; travelling swiftly, slipping back to different times, and strange places, until at last I stood beside an old piano, gray, and mumbling with memories of past duties. Beneath my feet creaking wood and all around velvet-deep, portraited walls and the darkness smelled of pain. Trembling, I lit a small candle to ease my own beginning hurt.

Then silence. Deep, black silence filled the faces on the walls and hushed the keys beside me. I felt a breath upon my cheek, and words crept silently into my mind:

. . . Silence is all we dread.
There's Ransom in a voice —
But Silence is Infinity.
Himself have not a face . . .

"Yes, Emily, I said quietly," you were a woman then, and writing in your own peculiar way — looking at life through inner lenses; examining your mind first then comparing the world's reality with your own finer instincts."

My heart warmed in spite of the cold; I was beginning to understand her mind; her depths. She had come to know that Silence well, and had found Infinity to be a faceless forever.

I stepped forward slowly; my candle, a brave reminder of reality, began to whisper of hidden thoughts and closeted dreams and I felt upon my fingers the warm wax tears of its diminishing truth.

By a window now, a garden-window, I caught a play of light and shadow, and a form appeared; then faded, and came again. Scents of flowers long died, came through the heavy air. Perhaps she was even now remembering those dozen years she hid her dreams beneath crumbling sod and spade; denying the poetry she hid in an earthen heart.

She turned and spoke, and I could not see her face:

. . . When One has given up One's life
The parting with the rest
Feels easy, as when Day lets go
Entirely the West . . .

"Yes, true," I mused, setting down that feeble remnant of my world and wiping my hands of its stains. "And you, sweet spirit, gave all your reality and all your truth to preserve love's various demands; even for the worst to honor the best."

Silence and darkness again. I thought to leave, yet she stirred once more, and in a voice more distant still and weeping softer I felt her say:

. . . It ceased to hurt me, though so slow
I could not feel the Anguish go —
But only knew by looking back —
That something — had benumbed the Track —
Nor when it altered, I could say
For I had worn it, every day,
As constant as the Childish frock —
I hung upon the Peg, at night.
But not the Grief — that nestled close
as needles — ladies softly press
To Cushion Cheeks —
To keep their place —
Nor what consoled it, I could trase —
Except, whereas 'twas wilderness —
Its' better — almost Peace — . . .

"Peace, Emily, peace!" I cried. "And Godspeed back to rest." There seemed no more to say or do. My visions faded; and again I sped through years and times. At last home; to book and chair and other mundane things; at last home where only I would never be the same.

These days hence, I think my thoughts with different view, remembering that slim apparition that taught me true substance and true worth; Inner vision formed by all the senses, judging things external from a secure and faithful knowledge of higher truth was Emily's deliverance; I hope it shall be mine.

. . . By a departing light
We see acuter, quite,
Than by a wick that stays.

There's something in the flight
That clarifies the sight
And decks the rays . . .



"Once There Were Pines"

Vicki Budd

I Listened to an Old Man Today

by

Jurgen Juziuk

I listened to an old man today
tell me of long ago times,
times when wars were just
and death was glorious
and good victorious.

I listened to the old man today
tell me of those early years,
years when the air was clean
and streams were crystal clear
and noises didn't hurt the ear.

I listened to that old man today
tell me of the bygone days,
days when streets were safe
and kids were respectful
and times more peaceful.

I listened to an old man today
tell me of the good old times,
times seventy years ago
and he was still young
and it was 1971.

Keep Cool

by

Cheryl Trudeau

Society's pressure is beating down.
Your hopes and spirits sink.
And troubles seem to just rebound.
Keep cool and take a drink.

In time of need you get laid off.
In vain, you shed a tear.
Your nose is running; you have a cough.
Keep cool and have a beer.

Age has turned your wife to fat.
Your daughter — she's on pot.
The basement's overrun with rats.
Keep cool and take a shot.

And when God comes down on judgment day.
You'll be waiting with your trunk.
He'll tell you to come without delay.
You can't; you're too damn drunk.

Joey's a Big Boy Now

by

Jurgen Juziuk

Joey could feel it as soon as he pushed open the door to his bedroom. He stopped in the doorway, where the smell of cool, fresh, clean sheets reached out from the darkness to meet the warm stale air that tried to push in around him with the light from the hallway. Downstairs, his mother and father were watching TV in the living room; across the hall, his older brother Robert was studying behind the closed door that led to his bedroom and Joey continued to stand in the doorway — alone. Alone but for the presence he felt was in the cold dark room, that was hiding from him somewhere in what had become a large inky black cavern — it was watching him. Its unseen eyes weighed heavily on Joe's young courage. Yet despite the threat of instant horror, Joey reached up the wall to his left in hopeful search of the giant killer, the true savior of mankind, the white knight, slayer of countless nightmares, the switch that brought man out of the dark and showed him the true light. At the same time he expected to touch the scaly skin of the creature of darkness that was silently trying to destroy him. Then, in the eternal silence of a split second there was light and God took his six-year-old hand from the switch.

Now with the light, Joey could eliminate dozens of possible hiding places for the thing that had now been stormed and conquered, for the moment, by the revealing light from high above. There still remained a few strongly defended havens of darkness which only the bravest of attackers could hope to destroy. Across the room stood the bed and under it was the darkness which breeds unknown evils; on the left was the closet door which stood now as an effective barrier to the dark secrets that lurked silently within its domain; on the right, next to Joey, was the door to his room and on the other side of it was a hidden region that seemed as distant as the far side of the moon and just as dark and mysterious.

This certainly was the time to consider reinforcements. His mother and father must have had some experience with this sort of thing sometime in their lives. Robert might also be a good general to consult in this siege of the darkness. Joey hesitated, though, his mother and father had often told him, "Joey, you're a big boy now; you've got to learn to do things on your own more. You can't expect mommy and daddy to help you all the time."

"Yes, Daddy, I'm a big boy now and big boys aren't afraid of anything are they?"

On the battlefield of his mind, Joey fought with Joey for an answer. One pushed him forward into the room and forced the defenses of evil which it said only he could crush. The other pulled him from the fight to the safety and security that waited for him in the living room. The battle was evenly drawn when a compromise came upon the scene in the form of Robert. Surely he could turn to him, yet . . . "Aw, you're just an ol' scaredy cat, Joey, you're afraid of everything. Why don't you grow up."

"But I'm scared Robert, please help me, please Robert, please help me."

No, the answer must lay somewhere within himself; he must do it alone, on his own. Wait. Not all alone; he would have help.

He found it in the dresser drawer in his mother and father's room. It was heavy, much heavier than his toys but this was real and loaded, too. Joey had often seen his father use it. He knew that the hammer must be pulled back; this he did with all the strength that could be summoned from his six-year-old hands until he heard the click of the hammer as it positioned itself to strike forward at the slightest touch of the hair trigger. So armed, Joey moved to his room once more to do battle with the unknown forces that lay there in ambush for him.

He peeked through the crack of the door and searched with his eye that region which had seemed so remote earlier; carefully he scanned all around the area bounded on the left by the door, on the right by the wall and above by the ceiling and below by the floor — nothing was seen — all was quiet on the western front. Now the battle shifted to the bed and the area of darkness that lay below it. Joey got down on all fours and crept toward it with a constant eye out for any sign of hostile movement from the depths that lay before him — nothing was seen and now the last frontier waited on the left. From his position it stood tall and impregnable to attack; the brass eye stood unblinkingly on its pedestal, waiting to squeak the alarm of attack on the sacred interior it guarded. It must be there, nowhere else could Joey find the presence of life that he felt now even stronger than before. He brought the gun up, aimed it at the door and all its secrets. With the gun leading the way Joey crawled closer — then he heard it — a breathing — a steady breathing sound was coming from behind the door. His eyes were wild with fright, every nerve in his young body was walking a tightrope between panic and reason; suddenly the great brass eye blinked as it turned on its stand and let out a groan. Then almost as suddenly, there was the shock of the pistol firing into the door and beyond — then, silence.

Joey was downstairs when the men in white shirts put the small blanketed form on their stretcher and then put the stretcher into the truck and drove away into the night, the flashing red light fading into the lights of the traffic that had stopped for it.

"When will Robert come out of his room, Mommy?"

The Leaping Frog's Fate

by

Nancy C. Biskey

From morning until night,
From sunup to sundown,
It was the frog's delight
To leap around the pond.
He'd one day meet his plight
But 'til then he never frowned
For he didn't easily fright
While acting like a clown.

From lily pad to lily pad,
From one side to the other,
It was freedom that he had
Until he gave no bother.
He was captured by a lad
And was taken to his mother
With whom it was a fad
To make frog legs for her brother.

So, leaping frogs, beware
Of the carefree hand of man.
For you he has no cares,
Only likes you in a pan.
Your freedom will be rare,
Especially on the land.
Go leaping if you dare
But not too far inland.

In the Mind of Man

by

Mary Ann Shutt

The sunlight filtered down in dusty rays through the dark green canopy formed by the trees. There were no other sounds except for an occasional bluejay's chattering and the gurgle of a brook as it cut through the deep, green velvety carpet of moss on the forest floor. This was to be the site of the meeting, or better, the debate.

Soon those who were to participate in the meeting began to arrive. The first to come was the lady named Peace. Peace was the most beautiful creature Man's eyes could ever behold. Slowly she came to the edge of the brook and looked into crystalline waters, her golden, flowing hair dipping into the water. As she sat and gazed at her reflection, the face of the second member of the meeting appeared over her shoulder. It was the face of a child no more than five, strong and thoughtful. She turned to the child and gently pulled him onto her lap. With the softness of a kitten's purr she began to sing to him, lulling him to sleep. As the two sat there the third and final member of the meeting approached.

His name was Aggression and he was very tall and dark and moved with long unbroken strides. One side of his face was grotesquely marred and there was a certain air of violence and death about him. As he approached the two, he chuckled darkly before he spoke.

"Why do you coddle the young fool? Don't you understand that he really doesn't want anything from you?"

With a slight smile on her lips she said, "How can you say that? It is my name that he cries out both day and night. He calls out for the comfort and safety only I can give him. With me he can learn, invent, discover and grow. With you he can only know pain, death, sorrow and war."

"That child you call Man," he retorted, "whom you hold, cannot thrive and grow when he has nothing to fight for or struggle against. He must have war and pain or he can't advance. Aggression and fight are inborn characteristics with this creature and all your love won't change that."

She shook her head slowly, "No, I cannot believe that is true. Man has never known peace since his creation; he must have a chance at it."

The child awoke and tumbled from her arms. Laughter gurgling in his throat, he clamored to his feet. For the first time he caught sight of the dark stranger. The breath caught in his throat and he clutched for the soft, white velvet folds of her gown.

Suddenly, Aggression reached into his pocket and brought forth an object in his tightly clenched fist.

"Come, see what fortunes and wealth I have for you," he said quietly to the youth. But still the child held onto Peace.

"So, you must first see what I have to offer," Aggression laughingly said. "Very well then, come forward and see." Slowly he opened his hand and in it was a gem so incredibly bright and clear as to take the breath away. Colors of every hue beamed from it with a blinding intensity.

The child gasped for joy. The gleam of greed crept into his eyes as he moved away from Peace. Aggression continually motioned the child forward, until Man stood at his feet reaching up for the bauble. Blinded by the brilliance of the gem, Man could not see the razor-like edges that encompassed the gem until they had cut into his flesh.

"You see," said Aggression to Peace, "he is too greedy and selfish to care what you try to do for him. We want what I have to offer regardless of the consequences."

Sadly she looked at the child as it nursed its bleeding hands.

"Your arguments are strong, but I feel that Man, if given a chance, would stay at my side. But I know that this cannot be settled now. The child is hurt and someone must tend his wounds."

"Yes, you are right," Aggression said. "We will meet again and see then, whom the child wants. As for now, I am certain that he will never want to know your warmth."

She smiled at him now, "We will see, we will see."

Finis

by

Rye Sing Son

Manhattan

suspended beneath cabbage breath
of sulphuric oxides
columns of glassy steel, and flashing iron —
 nocturnal fiery pillars
 smog tokens at noon
of gods creating a wonderland
flowing with sour milk and rancid honey
drifting above the swarthy scum where
sickened minnows open
 then close
bony lips
like white-eyed children
passively wheezing for clean air;
diorite wall street celebrates suave generals
gliding along the clacking crush
genuflecting beside the crusty portal of
Patrick, the saint
Shiva's henchmen
sniff dogwood incense
clapping for life after wealth
heroes hoard gold
for guilt caskets
while ticker tape gathers behind
red-pad bar doors
and wearysome glances pass for
winsome smiles

Abu Simbel

stares, glares
deceptive sandstone eyes know
centuries of keen blindness
still splendor
mute strength
of Ramses, war king
enduring enduring the raucous army
a demented moor
frenzied artillery
 shrieking
mother touches pallid, numb,
and still baby
 drifting billowing parchment wisdom
 relinquished to vast dusty skies
 listless winds steal Ramses cheek
 through Manhattan's waste

Golgatha reigns

we were lepers
 along Jerusalem's road
we were lame
 on temple steps

we were blind

 beside rippling pools
we are the sighing crucified
 crowned with bramble spines

The Red Light Drones

by

Carol Anderson

The barren, windswept desert lay quiet and still in the light of the August moon. Majestic rocky buttes cast sinister shadows on barrel cactuses. Stars winked coldly at the dry, cracked earth. There was something evil lurking in the midnight air.

From over the cacumen of the mountain range horizon blinked faintly a red light. As it grew larger, a barely audible drone broke the stillness of night's lagoon.

The Red Light Drone hovered close now with its feelers whirling and whirring at a furious rate. Sand, dust, and tumbleweed flew in all directions at its command.

Slowly, this metallic, mechanical monster lowered itself to the ground. Its incessant roar was quickly stifled and the feelers slowed to a stop. The quiet of the night regained its hold, but only for a short time.

The Drone stood glittering in the moon-lit night, and without warning, spewed three strangely laden men from its bowels. The men talked in low hushed tones, then separated and walked off in three different directions, carrying their arm-loads of large boxes. Soon the men returned, minus their load, and repositioned themselves at the front of the Drone. They muttered to one another in a steady undercurrent, taking time out to glance at their wrists and then to a spot in the horizon from which they had come. Two of the men, after a few minutes of surveillance, walked to the side of the Drone and were soon engulfed within. The remaining man lowered his hulk to the ground and stretched out. He rummaged in his coat pocket for a few seconds. There was a rustle of paper, and then a tiny flame leaped forth only to be quickly snuffed out.

An uneasy silence settled, hoping for some rest but knowing it would not be allowed. Minutes ticked by.

There — on the horizon — another red light! Another Red Light Drone coming to have evil intercourse with the first one? Another monster to share in the rape of the once quiet night? As the roar grew louder, there was a scurrying in the belly of the first Drone. The man on the ground leaped to his feet and disappeared into the machine.

The second Drone was hovering a distance away, seemingly suspended on an invisible wire of nothingness. Its red light blinked once, twice, three times. And then it waited.

The Drone on the ground answered the strange mating call by blinking a different series.

The second Drone approached the first Drone and with a flurry, lowered itself to the earth. In a moment, it was quiet.

As if on some cue, some signal, the three men from the first Drone appeared and two men from the other seemed to materialize. They merged into one group and a low pitch of discussion began. One of the two newcomers disappeared only to return with a large attaché case. One of the three men then departed around a cactus and brought back to the circle of men a large box.

A strange ritual was then begun. The box was placed in the middle of the circle of flesh, and was then opened. All five of the men were sitting on their haunches looking expectantly at the man who held the attaché case. Very carefully, he reached into the box and removed one of many plastic bags that were filled with a substance that looked like snow. He opened the bag, looked at the four faces that were fixed on his own, and then he licked his right index finger. The finger was then inserted into the white powder and cautiously raised to the tip of his tongue. An appreciative smile crossed his distorted face and he stood. The rest followed suit. More discussion, then the three men from the first Drone walked off in three different directions.

They returned with the large boxes and disposed of them in the hungry belly of the second Drone. The assumed leader of the three then took into his possession the attaché case. He opened it, rifled through it, and then closed it, apparently satisfied with its contents.

The three men shook hands with the two men then turned to board their flying machine. The two men also were making their exit. But before either machine could digest the men, a shout fell on their ears.

"F.B.I. — Freeze!"

Like a flash, the men clambered for their Drones, not bothering to search with their eyes the obstacles that concealed the enemy.

A crack was heard and a flash of lightning was spit from a near butte.

The Drones came to life and started twirling their feelers and twisting their tails. As they made an effort to escape, a rainstorm of metal showered down on them. They floundered in the bullet-fed air. The second Drone dipped drunkenly, shuddered, regained its equilibrium, and was able to effect a hasty retreat into the night.

The first Drone gained some altitude, when suddenly it whirled, and lurched heavily toward the ground.

With the scream of a fatal wound, the Drone plunged its fiery frame into its desert grave with an explosive force.

The night was interrupted by the piercing light of the molten mass. But as time ticked by, the darkness slowly smothered the remaining life.

Except for an occasional hiss of the smoldering fire, the night had gradually regained its quiet and peaceful regime.

Resurrection

by

Rye Sing Son

Lazarus was his name, I think — a helpless babe born at dawn.

- I Wild dogs are prowling the forest of vines
howling for blood only innocence saves;
dawn brings the Truth with a wail or a tear
waiting for laurels or a thistle

Candles herald hope, the night is too black —
brown serpent swirls, undulates in the haze:
“Come with me, lie with me, be my new man . . . ”
— praying for life with the dawn

- II. Cannon hail victory when nations win wars;
the spirit hails clouds that are borne on the wind
while daisies turn petals to catch yellow rays
silently whispering to doves

Reaching to light and a life hale and free
rising from Hell's vicious kiss
greeting the blue sky, the orange cloud with pink
turning and twisting and stretching to feel
every soft ray of gilt light

- III. Triumph is mighty, it flows in the rain
floating in fields beyond life
seeking a hand always warm, always kind
blooming on stems in the clouds
hopeful and trusting, it stirs in a twig

blown in the gale's drenching wind
Triumph means touching blue domes with the hawk
listening with hope in your heart
inhaling lilies returning to life
and singing the song of your soul

A Student's Plea

by

Carol Anderson

Inspire me, teacher,
Of my interest take hold.
Don't bore me with tradition
And let my mind grow cold.

Understand, instructor,
My plea, if you can,
And help me become
An educated man.

Pax

by

Rye Sing Son

Death smiles behind the bedroom door
but the time is not yet come
for in the darkness of the night
and in the lumin of the day
a voice has entered this weary mind:

Come!
stare till eyes no longer see
speak with a throat hoarse and raw

toil near the distant snow-capped peak
run till every bone grinds
Come!

bring a soul that's happy and strong
for the race is short and your rest is long

in the mirror smiles a livid face —
speaking of peace

Love Is

by

Pearl Swanson

a sparkle of affection
magnified in the mind.
reaching to an outstretched hand
amid these trying times.

a dark house
enlightened by glowing faces.

the Spring
when from the earth
rises beauty, love
and hope.

outside man's endeavors
but within his mindful grasp.
beneath the roaring waves of life
above the sky so blue.

one small step
towards understanding

the winding path of life.

Parturition

by

Jim McPhee

pale room with sunlight
hurrying through the window
over blue linoleum flecked
with gray
sliced, cozy square
draws, fades, radiating upon
quilted patches
friends next door squealing and laughing

Close-shaven grasses near red roses
brash crimson screaming
trembling among thorns
white, sharp thorns on brown stems

pale room white curtains
in leisure billow
puffs
amiable, expansive brightness
toy guns, red trucks, a blue drum

in the corner
dominoes, tinkertoys, marbles
near the drum

pale room window
past, beyond, past
black warty gnarls
alder green leaves
soft and tender
in afternoon winking, nodding
a goldfinch canary flittering
tittering on high

pale room with window
Spring's heaven
growing within

